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City of Newton, Massachusetts Community Preservation Committee

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Board of Aldermen
FROM: Community Preservation Committee
DATE: February 21, 2007
RE: **CPC Recommendation for CPA Funding**

PROJECT TITLE: City Archive Preservation Project
CPA CATEGORY: Historic Preservation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The applicants, City Clerk/Clerk of the Board of Aldermen and the Newton Engineering Department, request \$150,000 (plus a small legal fee) of CPA historic preservation funds to preserve Newton historic archival material held in the vaults of the City Clerk, City Engineer, and in collection at Newton Free Library. The FY07 request is for \$73,920 plus a maximum \$850 for legal fees. The CPA anticipates an FY08 request for the remaining \$76,076. The City archives holds documents dating back to 1679 and contains a wealth of historical information about Newton and its people. This information must be accessible to City employees, Newton residents, and the public interested in genealogy or history. For years, the City's archives have been subject to overuse, poor climate, moisture, and fire controls, and inaccessibility to the public. Partially based on a 2004 graduate student survey, the proposed project would remedy the storage and access issues with the City's archives by the providing the following:

- Storage facilities for permanent preservation of vital records- births, deaths, and adoptions and records relating to City government functions including oaths of office, ordinances, depositions, and Aldermanic committee agendas and reports
- Fireproof housing and additional shelving for materials in active use by the Board of Aldermen
- Preservation of records that are in danger of being lost due to overuse or neglect in the City's vaults
- A digital repository for access to the City's historical records
- Compliance with MGL c.66 § 9 requiring communities to properly bound their public record books

The project is broken down into two years. A City-funded Archivist position would care for and maintain the historic document collections described in the application. The CPA application budget breakdown can be found in the attached documentation but is summarized as follows:

Recommended FY07		Anticipated FY08	
• Document conservation/preservation:	\$35,200	Document conservation/preservation:	\$44,800
• Shelving & Fireproof cabinets:	\$32,000	Shelving & Fireproof cabinets:	\$14,360
• Document Scanning:	\$0	Document Scanning:	\$10,000
• 10% contingency:	\$6,720	10% contingency:	\$6,916
• Legal Fees	\$850		
• Total FY07	\$74,440	Total FY08	\$76,076

FINDINGS

Community Preservation Act (MGL c.44B)

Historic Preservation

MGL c.44B §2 was amended in September 2006 to include “document or artifact” in the definition of an historic resource. Therefore, the new definition of historic resource is “a building, structure, vessel, real property, **document**, or artifact that is listed or eligible for listing on the state register of historic places or has been determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of a city or town.” The City Archive Preservation Project has the strong support from the Newton Historical Commission. The Commission believes documents, artifacts, and other materials held in the archive are significant to the culture and history of Newton and, therefore, should be well preserved.

MGL c.44B §2 permits the use of funds “for the acquisition, **preservation**, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic resources.” This project would preserve some of Newton’s significant historic resources.

Newton Community Preservation Plan

Overarching Goals

1. Contribute to the preservation of Newton’s unique character, boost the vitality of the community and enhance the quality of life for its residents.	Yes
2. Serve more than one CPA category.	No
3. Demonstrate the highest cost/benefit value relative to other proposals.	See below
4. Leverage other public and/or private funds.	No
5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.	Yes, see below
6. Show that a project is the most reasonable available option to achieve the objective.	Yes, see below
7. Demonstrate strong community support.	See below
8. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.	See below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 3: Compared to other FY07 CPA historic preservation applications, the City Archive Preservation project is on the second least expensive. The least expensive is the Newton Fire Department Door Restoration at \$8,030 and the priciest is the Durant Kenrick Homestead at \$2,710,000.

Goal 5: This project would help protect overused documents and would provide the public with simple, reliable access to archival materials.

Goal 6: The City Archive Preservation Project’s objective is to preserve overused documents by scanning them for digital access as well as purchasing fireproof storage for document collections are reasonable methods for historic preservation.

Goal 7: The project is supported by the Newton Free Library, the Newton Historical Commission, and the Veterans Office of the City of Newton.

Goal 8: The City Archives are a repository for documents from all over Newton.

Historic Preservation Goals

1. Support the preservation and/or restoration of municipally owned resources that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked, found to be “preferably preserved” or historically significant by the Newton Historical Commission.	N/A
2. Support the preservation and restoration of privately owned properties that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked, found to be “preferably preserved” or historically significant by the Newton Historical Commission.	N/A
3. Encourage protection of resources that retain their historical integrity, in terms of location, context, design, style, workmanship, and materials.	Yes, see below
4. Enable access to the resource by the public, including access by disabled residents.	Yes, see below

5. Support the objectives and priorities of local historic preservation organizations, such as the Newton Historical Society, the Newton History Museum, local historic districts, and other such organizations within the City of Newton.	Yes
6. Where appropriate, address the issues and goals raised in the forthcoming Citywide Preservation Plan.	N/A

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 3: The City Archive project would preserve historic documents.

Goal 4: The project would provide digital access for some of the City’s most sought after documents, including those relating to genealogy.

CPC RECOMMENDATION

The proposal is consistent with the CPA criteria and many of the Plan’s goals, as outlined above. Therefore, the Community Preservation Committee voted unanimously to recommend funding the City Archive Preservation Project at a reduced amount for one year. The CPC recommends the requested \$73,920 for one year plus legal fees, not to exceed \$850 to be appropriated from the Historic Preservation Reserve, subject to the following conditions.

1. The City project manager or designee shall submit a status report to the CPC on a quarterly basis that describes work that is complete, work remaining, expenditures and target completion date.
2. Work shall commence no later than December 31, 2007 and shall be completed no later than December 31, 2008 or such other date(s) as may be approved in writing by the Planning Director. In the event of failure to meet the project start or completion dates as stated herein or as approved by the Planning Director, any remaining funds in the project account shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.
3. Promptly after substantial completion of the planning and design work, the applicant shall submit to the Community Preservation Committee a final project development cost statement. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.